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ABSTRACT

Arts Unlimited, housed at Bowling Green State University, Ohio, is a program of aesthetic education in the schools of northwestern and north central Ohio and is modeled after and works with Lincoln Center Institute, the educational division of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City. The goal of Lincoln Center Institute and its colleagues is to help students and teachers perceive and evaluate the aesthetic elements of specific works of music, theater, dance, and visual arts. By doing so, children will come to value the arts not only as an enrichment for their lives, but also as a set of intellectual skills by which they may inquire into the aesthetic dimensions of their environments. This year-round, three-stage program includes a summer teacher's workshop, a follow-up program in the schools (sending teaching artists into the schools to assist teachers), and a series of spring performances or exhibitions of the works encountered by the teachers the previous summer for the children. Since 1981, this program has worked with over 600 teachers and 25,000 students in 50 schools within a 13-county area. It is recommended that if such a program is initiated on a college campus, attention must be paid to the following points: the cost effectiveness of the program must be demonstrated; faculty can earn extra money as teaching artists and can renew themselves professionally via this program; and the program must emphasize service to the schools. (Author/SM)

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AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

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Arts Unlimited

Abstract

Arts Unlimited, established in 1981, is a program of aesthetic education in the schools of northwestern and north central Ohio. It is one of 16 programs in the United States and Australia that is modeled after and which works with Lincoln Center Institute, the educational division of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York.

The goal of the Lincoln Center Institute and its colleagues is to enable students and their classroom teachers to perceive and evaluate the aesthetic elements of specific works of music, theatre, dance, and visual art. By so doing, children will come to value the arts not only as an enrichment for their lives, but also as a set of intellectual skills by which they may inquire into the aesthetic dimensions of their environments.

Since 1981, Arts Unlimited has worked with over 600 teachers and 25,000 children in nearly 50 schools throughout a 13-county area of northwestern and north central Ohio schools. The program is a year round sequence of: (1) a one-week summer workshop for regular classroom teachers that introduces them to the works of art for preview and study; (2) a follow-up program that places teaching artists in the schools during the fall and winter to work with the teachers and their students to implement the workshop program; and (3) a series of children's performances or exhibitions in the spring of the works studied (the same works introduced to the teachers the previous summer).

By working through the classroom teacher and by defining a segment of the arts -- aesthetic perception -- that they can quickly utilize in a solid way, Arts Unlimited and the other Lincoln Center affiliates are developing a way that will reach large numbers of children with a program that is as integral to their learning as math, science, or language arts.

Arts Unlimited

Introduction

Arts Unlimited is a program of aesthetic education in the schools of northwestern and north central Ohio (K-12) that was initiated by Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in 1981, and is currently housed in the Office of Continuing Education. The program is also one of 16 programs in the United States and Australia that are linked to Lincoln Center Institute, which is the educational arm of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York. The other affiliates are located in: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Binghamton, and Albany, NY; Newark, DE; Memphis and Nashville, TN; Tulsa, OK; San Diego, CA; Eugene, OR; Houston, TX; and Melbourne, Australia. Other programs are slated to begin in Lincoln, NE (The Univ. of Nebraska); and in Denver, CO.

Background

In May 1988, Frank Hodsoll, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announced that the "cultural literacy" of the nation's school children was in jeopardy because the arts were not being taught properly. A survey by the Endowment revealed that the schools did not take the arts seriously, that knowledge about the arts was not a primary educational objective, and that there was serious disagreement on what should constitute arts education. Consequently, children were less able, in Hodsoll's words "to understand or contribute to civilization, to foster creativity, to communicate effectively, or to make wise choices among products of the arts." (Washington Post, May 4, 1988).

Hodsoll's findings were but the latest in a long litany of complaints and concerns about arts education. Elliot Eisner had written several years earlier that Western culture had dismissed the arts as a non-intellctual activity, "a product of talent, something from the emotions rather than the intellect." Eisner went on to observe that most people believe the schools "are places where the mind rather than the hand is educated, where ideas, not images, are cultivated, [therefore] they should focus on intelligence, thought, and cognition, and not upon soul, emotion, or imagination."

When BGSU surveyed the status of arts education in northwestern Ohio schools in 1980, it found other factors that in effect relegated arts education to second-class academic citizenship:

(1) a narrow definition of "basic education" that emphasized job training; (2) a precarious funding base for schools that prevented many districts from planning beyond the next school tax levy; (3) a cultural isolation that was reinforced by the primarily rural/small town location and accompanying mind-set; (4) a dearth of trained art, music, or movement teachers with an accompanying loss of advocacy; and (5) the lack of any ideas on how an arts experience -- such as a field trip to a museum or attendance at a concert -- could be integrated into the daily life of the classroom.

Often, a classroom teacher would be assigned to "cover" the art or music lesson time, in order to comply with the State Education Department's mandate of so many minutes of instruction per week. But this was a hit-or-miss proposition that depended on whether that teacher had had any background in the arts. In some instances, as Laura Chapman has noted, the arts in the schools have suffered, ironically, because of an elitist attitude by arts supporters that implied that the schools were too plebeian to promote, enjoy, or teach high-quality "artistic" experiences.

Despite these obstacles, the BGSU survey found, many teachers and administrators realized that their children needed the arts and that the arts were central to quality education. The problem, as they saw it, was in gaining access to quality arts experiences, of developing a delivery system to the children, and of building a support network within the communities. Would BGSU provide the leadership in attaining these objectives?

Implementation

After examining several models, a committee of BGSU and area school administrators and faculty decided that Lincoln Center Institute's approach would be the most adaptable to the mostly rural clientele that would use it:

1. Lincoln Center emphasizes the importance of aesthetic education, as opposed to arts education or arts appreciation. Aesthetic education gives to teachers and students an understanding of the "building blocks" of the arts as well as of the decision-making processes used by artists in utilizing them to create a work of art. Thus, by "getting behind" a work of art, students and their teachers learn to ask aesthetic questions about their environment and thus gain a measure of control over at least part of that environment.

2. In order to introduce laypersons to something as esoteric as aesthetic perception without losing them, Lincoln Center concentrates on the study/experincing of specific works or compositions in the arts (usually music, theatre, dance, and visual arts -- although some of the affiliates have branched out

into other areas such as literature, poetry, and architecture). Such an approach, moreover, does not demand artistic talent per se and is thus a road that many students may travel.

3. The approach to the arts should be holistic, utilizing a person's entire range of learning senses. If, as Harry Broudy maintains, it is the role of the arts to "objectify the emotions", then the educational experience must be emotional and intuitive as well as cognitive and analytical. It is one of the unique and exciting properties of the arts as a discipline to hold these contradictory tendencies in a kind of colloidal suspension, but most schools unfortunately fail to come to grips with it.

4. If aesthetic education is to reach large numbers of children, then the classroom teachers must play a central role. They, therefore, must be the first to be trained.

To actualize the above concepts, a year-round, three-stage program has evolved:

A summer teachers workshop that consists of: (1) performances and previews of works of music, theatre, dance, and art that will be available to the schools; (2) seminars for the teachers to develop their "skills of impression" at understanding the aesthetic dimensions of those works; (3) lectures on the importance and characteristics of aesthetic inquiry; and (4) discussion on how to take the workshop experience back to the schools in the fall.

A follow-up program in the schools whereby Teaching Artists (TA's) will be sent into the schools to assist the teachers in implementing what they learned in the summer. The TA's will conduct planning sessions early in the school year with teams of four to five classroom teachers. These teachers will be expected to teach on their own as well as work with the TA's when they make visits to the students during the late fall and winter. The goal is to enable the children, by concentrating on a specific work, to learn to generalize and abstract about aesthetic elements, such as color, light, texture, form, space, energy, and line from that work of art.

Performances or exhibitions of the works for the children. The program now comes full circle, as the children experience the same work(s) that their teachers encountered the previous summer. These performance serve as both final examination and as a "dessert" in that we want to find out if the children can apply what they learned with the TA, and we also want them to experience the thrill of a live performance (as opposed to the unremitting vicarious experience of television)

None of these practices individually is new, but their combination and application collectively to reach large groups of people are new, as illustrated by Arts Unlimited's almost geometric rate of growth:

Arts Unlimited Enrollments, 1983-89

Year	No. of Teachers	No. of Schools	No. of Students	No. of Counties
1983-84	15	4	680	2
1984-85	44	10	1,500	4
1985-86	95	25	3,800	8
1986-87*	107	37	8,300	10
1987-88*	120	41	7,000	12
1988-89*	130	41	7,000	13

*Denotes a satellite summer training workshop established at BGSU's two-year campus in Huron, OH, 60 miles east of BGSU

As important as the growth in numbers has been the effort to improve the quality of the program by engaging artists of increasingly higher calibre and developing a cadre of talented TA's. As performers of greater national reputation began to appear with the program, they in turn had an impact on University functions. The most recent example was in 1988 when Arts Unlimited brought in Shozo Sato and his 25-member cast and crew from the University of Illinois for a week-long residency of Kabuki Othello. The Department of Theatre made it a part of their regular season's offering.

The quality was recognized by the National University Continuing Education Association which recognized Arts Unlimited in 1984 for its "outstanding and creative programming in the arts and humanities". In 1986, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities named the program national co-winner of its Mitau Award for exemplifying change and innovation in American higher education.

Organization

Arts Unlimited is housed in BGSU's Office of Continuing Education, rather than in an academic department. Continuing Education is seen as "neutral ground" and relatively free from the normal tensions and "turfing" among competing departments. The director can operate as an honest broker in negotiating among the departments and in utilizing University resources selectively. Continuing Education can offer more kinds of

interdisciplinary programs than can the departments; it is more sensitive to and experienced with the fluctuations of educational demand and supply, especially with the so-called "nontraditional" students (who are the program's clients); and it knows the territory outside the Ivory Tower. It is relatively easy through Continuing Education to identify and utilize arts resources that are not part of the campus. By balancing on- and off-campus arts offerings to the schools, the program can appear more as a community activity -- an image that is important in rural areas. Finally, Continuing Educaton is more comfortable in mixing academic and non-academic styles of learning -- a quality that is important to the kind of attitude that Arts Unlimited has hoped to foster.

There is a 12-member Citizens Advisory Board appointed by the director of Arts Unlimited with the advice of its members. They serve staggered three-year terms and are teachers, parents, businessmen, community leaders, artists, or arts administrators. Although the Board has no legal or fiduciary authority, it plays an increasingly important role through program planning, fund-raising, school recruitment, and community relations.

A similar relationship exists with Lincoln Center Institute. There are no legal or financial ties. The directors meet twice a year to discuss matters of common concern, to learn from each other, and to seek ways by which to share resources, personnel, or repertoire.

Evaluation

Assessing arts and arts education program has been notoriously difficult. Although strong efforts are underway in such programs as Harvard's Project Zero or the Getty Foundation's Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE) project, progress has been slow partly because of the largely "non-quantifiable" domain of the arts, the suspicion by many arts people of "testing" of any kind, and a tendency among many educators to define evaluation in quantifiable social science (and in some cases, pseudo-social scientific) terms. Put another way, the arts deal with a kind of "truth" or insight that does not lend itself easily to modes of assessment currently fashionable in the schools.

It is, never the less, possible to identify and discuss some evidence as to the program's effectiveness. That fact that most of it is anecdotal does not render it unsuitable; people, after all,are capable of making reasonable judgments and exercising common sense without always having to rely on control groups. If that judgment, moreover, is consistent over time and if different people come to similar conclusions, then a case can be made for its validity. To wit:

1. Teacher Workshop Evaluations. For the past seven summers, a similar and open-ended questionnaire was completed by the teachers. The questionnaire asked if the teachers could demonstrate in some fashion a greater awareness and understanding of aesthetics in works of art and if they felt more comfortable in using aesthetic perception with their students. The answers from 1981 to 1989 have been uniform and strongly positive. The teachers demonstrated greater awareness and willingness to work with the arts.

The comments also went much further, speaking of a personal transformation within several teachers as a result of the workshop. Speaking of its intensity, one teacher observed that since the workshop ended, she had been "going through withdrawal". A typical comment is:

> "I felt a tremendous amount of personal growth. The experience was a delight. I was amazed at the ease with which I became absorbed in the types of activities that had been threatening to me in the past. I will be able to be much more responsive to the arts as I now have more understanding of the processes involved."

Another teacher was able to compare the week to other, more traditional modes of instruction:

> "Too often, the arts become a method of competing -- and that's the end product. The activities that we pursued [in the workshop] were non-competitive but we felt that we had achieved something and that experience is the key to aesthetic perception and enjoyment (I think)."

What about the children: Were they acquiring aesthetic perception? While teachers often must rely on non-verbal cues from the primary children, it was sometimes possible to elicit comments such as the following:

> "The music's tensing (loud) and relaxing (soft) were described by first-grader Anne King. Her classmate, David Johnson, made fists of his hands to emphasize that 'I'm going to . . . listen to tight music . . . and to light music that makes you let go."
>
> --newspaper interview

A sixth grader wrote this about his music experiences with the TA:

> "At first when we heard it [Effusions of the Sun, by Larry McFatter] it sounded dumb. Then after we heard it about five times, it was a good sound, not like at first. Then we all put together our own song. Different groups did different parts and it sounded great."

A classmate was a bit more esoteric:

> "The next piece [we heard] was 'Stopping by Wood' by Robert Frost, one of histories' [sic] great poets. Singing it, however, was a mistake in my opinion, because I felt it should have been dramatized."

Evaluations, such as the one above illustrate not only the intrinsic power of the arts to change people, but also the ability of people to use the arts as a tool of understanding.

Conclusions

When Arts Unlimited first began, it faced a number of troublesome questions: Could the Lincoln Center concept of aesthetic education be adapted to a small town, rural environment? Could the program survive in the jungle of university politics and zero-sum games that academicians were adept at playing? Could enough schools transcend the forces of parochialism and conservatism forced upon them by financial constraints to see the broader possibilities of the arts as a tool of aesthetic growth? Is the program replicable elsewhere?

The answer to these questions is yes. It can be initiated on a college campus if attention is paid to the following points:

1. While the program was originally targeted to in-service teachers, it is now seen to have possibilities for the University's internal curriculum. Thanks to recent changes in Ohio's teacher certification requirements, elementary education majors must concentrate in a non-professional area of study, such as math, language, or literature. Of 12 such areas, one is in the fine arts, thanks to efforts between Arts Unlimited and faculty in the College of Education in drafting it. A similar cooperative effort is underway in revising the Master of Education degree to include the Arts Unlimited summer workshop in the areas of social studies and language arts. Including variations of Arts Unlimited in the curriculum , therefore, is one of the better ways of ensuring a long life for it.

2. Most universities include as part of their mission statements the importance of service to the surrounding community. Arts Unlimited has become one of the more visible outreach efforts of

BGSU and a prime reason for continuing it; It generates a great deal of good will and public relations. The program must emphasize service to the schools, however, to be accepted.

3. As university faculties have become less mobile among institutions, they have often found it difficult to renew themselves professionally, particularly if avenues of advancement are narrowly proscribed. Many faculty at BGSU who have participated in the Arts Unlimited have found it a source of renewal and professional development, whether in the opportunity to try new teaching methods (which they can take back to their college classrooms) or in the opportunity to work with artists and art forms they otherwise would have not enjoyed. It is also a chance for faculty to earn extra money if they qualify as teaching artists.

4. It pays to have friends in high places. University departments are generally not known for experimenting with the curriculum or for launching interdisciplinary ventures. This often must be done by individual faculty who might be bucking the internal reward system and who will need some administrative support -- and perhaps "protection."

5. It is important to demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of the program, not only to university officials but also to the schools. This can be one of its most effective selling points for the following reasons: (a) One can charge tuition to the summer teacher training session; (b) If the university is subsidized by the state on a student enrollment basis, the teacher enrollment will generate more money; (c) For every classroom teacher trained, 20 to 30 children will be reached by that teacher and the cooperative TA. Since each TA is expected to work with four or five classrooms of children, that TA's salary can be apportioned among 80 to 150 children for a very low per pupil cost.

The practicality of the program, however, should not obscure what its real potentials are for promoting a holistic, inquiring approach to one's environment of beauty. The most positive benefits have continued to be educational and "spiritual". While academicians may be uncomfortable with such words in a campus setting, an awareness of the spiritual as well as the cognitive dimension of the arts is necessary if students are truly to experience something of the dignity and the dilemma of their human-ness.